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THE FOLLOWING ADDRESS,

Delivered at Albany, February 22, 1858, by the late

COL. WILLIAM A. JACKSON,

Of the Eighteenth Regiment of New-York Volunteers,
Is presented as a memento of him to the Officers and Privates of
the Regiment, by their friend Professor Jackson.

—
Fellow-Citizens :

I PROPOSE to speak to you of the Patriot Soldier.

I can conceive of no subject more appropriate to the day, which the Union with a single voice dedicates to the memory of one, whose life and virtues pronounce him to be the Father of the Republic.

The soldier acts an important part in the destiny of nations. From time immemorial, the supremacy of great principles, the progress of reforms, the elevation of popular ideas, have found their sustaining power in the sword.

The patriot soldier, thus reminded by history of the part he may be called to assume, should remember that he is the conservator of what is right in the present, the guardian of truth yet to be developed; and that he should so act, think, and labor, as to render himself the man of the times, prompt in thought, ready in action, fearless in the discharge of duty.

The first principle of the soldier's education is the resolution of all individual feelings and passions into the single idea of the full and proper discharge of the duties of his position. He must learn that he is but a unit in the composition of a force. He must never forget that efficacy and completeness of action are only ensured by singleness of purpose.

To accomplish this result, the soldier must forget himself, must banish all trivial thoughts from his mind, and make duty the pole star of his life. He, then, must be unselfish : his pleasures, his feelings, his passions, however stimulated, must yield a graceful submission to the imperative principle of duty.

To abnegate self is difficult, but it is equally heroic ; and he who obtains the victory has won but the first of a long series of battles, whose procession accumulates glory for his name, and, still better, awards the noble satisfaction of a well spent life.

Actuated by this idea, obstacles disappear, dangers vanish, and ambition and enthusiasm are thoroughly aroused. The true heroes of the world give you their examples. They fought and conquered in life, because they resolved all

thought of self into the one idea of duty. In death, they still live, because the meed of glory belongs to him alone whose duty was the paramount object of his life. You may find them upon every field, in every rank, of every tongue. Roman or Grecian, Gaul, Briton, or American, they close around us, a phalanx, whose front is always towards the enemy, and never broken. The soldier who emulates such examples, comes to regard his duty as a pleasure, not a task : he performs it because it is right, not because honor or emolument will be the result. In its discharge he anticipates no reward ; but, for its proper fulfilment, reward will seek him out.

The patriot soldier, devoted to the performance of his duty for its sake alone, will be enthusiastic in his devotion to his cause, and true to the preferment of its interests. He will be the man of principle. He will never forget those innate sentiments of honor implanted in every heart. His enthusiasm will be based upon truth. Duty and interest will be one, and no detail of his service, no requirement of his country will be neglected. Then indeed is the heart in the cause : then is there a motive to exertion, which will render it invincible.

Men may be drilled to move and fight with the exactitude of machines ; but without this enthusiasm springing from these causes, they are mere automata. With this motive in the heart of every soldier, the mass is a unit : then superiority of force cannot defeat, though it may exterminate. Thermopylæ, Chæronia, Waterloo, present you their examples of devoted squares never broken, never yielding, till the protracted agony of battle closed upon a field, where death could claim no more. The enthusiasm of the patriot soldier, fully persuaded of the rectitude of his cause, feeling that he has left unperformed no requirement of his calling, finds no obstacle in the presence of an enemy : skilful disposition of forces does not overawe him, fearful odds dismay him not ; they are but inducements to more strenuous exertions, and each man fights as if upon his efforts depended the safety of the army and the ultimate possession of the field. Such soldiers were the Hollanders of William the Silent, fighting for religious freedom amid the tumbling walls and ruined homes of their besieged cities : such the Ironsides of Cromwell, sternly fighting for a Christian Commonwealth : such the Patriots of '76, fighting for

the liberty we now enjoy ; such the men of the Empire, fighting for the glory of France and the progress of thought. These men had a definite purpose, and preserved a unity of sentiment which was the element of their success. They possessed those soldierly instincts and qualities which proceed from love of duty and enthusiasm in its discharge. Each soldier filled properly his sphere ; and all moving from a common center in the harmonious pursuance of a single purpose, they astounded the world by exploits which will remain unrivalled, until, the times “once more out of joint,” popular necessities shall evoke the dormant talents of men, born to organize, to conquer, to reform. But if the times do not require the immediate rivalry of those great deeds, the memory of which thrills every soul with admiration, they do require, and love of country, of hearthstone, requires, that we should never cease the “note of preparation ;” that we should never forget, as citizen soldiers, to emulate those men, who have bequeathed to all coming ages examples of chivalry, of fortitude, of patient suffering and heroic valor. In such emulation, there is no hero worship. We do not offer the mere man as an

example, but his great qualities, his good actions, his love for humanity, his hatred of the wrong.

Time is ever exhibiting men becoming heroic in the simple discharge of duty : the nameless graves of every battle-field attest it. Even now English voices send from the sultry plains of India the names of Neil and Nicholson, and swell the panegyric and the dirge in mournful unison over the tomb of Havelock.

There is heroism in every profession of life, and the soldier may find much to emulate in the quiet unassuming courage which consecrates more peaceful avocations than his own. He sees it in the frontiersman, lighting the torch of civilization in the far West ; in the reformer, enduring ridicule and persecution ; in the mariner, braving the storm of the Tropics, or bursting the icy barriers of the Poles. And where, citizens of Albany, can you find a nobler fortitude, a higher chivalry, a greater heroism, than in the calm courage of one, who lately walked our streets, a citizen of ours, who, in the awful hour of impending death, when the prison-house of the elements was opened, and they battled in their fury over the Central

America, stood at the post of duty, firm, undaunted, and went down bravely with his sinking ship, true to the instincts of his noble nature — CHARLES VAN RENSSELAER.

The world is filled with the history of heroes; and be they explorers or reformers, mariners or soldiers, men of peace or men of battle, their deeds are the heritage of the world, and it were ungrateful not to enjoy the gift by profiting by the example.

If the soldier is unselfish and enthusiastic in the discharge of his duty, he will avoid the bane of every avocation, jealousy. Rivalry of the proper kind is open, frank and generous: it does not seek renown in the discomfiture of others, but in its own superiority. A generous rivalry never wounds, but lends a helping hand to him who has failed in the struggle. In the great efforts of life, it does not attempt to retard competition, but, to render its own victory complete, invites and encourages it. On the battle-field, the brave and generous soldier, fully alive to his own responsibilities, quickens the energy of one, stimulates the faltering sense of duty in another, and permeates all who surround him with the vitality of his own purpose. When

the trumpets sound the charge, he not only nerves himself to the full execution of his duty, but infuses among his comrades that hopefulness of spirit, which enables every one, amid the carnage of the battle, to sustain the honor of his cause and the dignity of his manhood.

Mere physical courage, without moral force, cannot prove the successful champion of any cause. The great soldiers of the world who have accomplished important results for humanity, were men who established a standard of soldierly excellence, and not only satisfied themselves with its attainment, but impressed its necessity upon all who came within the sphere of their influence. The great underlying principle of this standard is that which invests it with a moral force, unhesitating discharge of duty. What honor is to every man, what virtue is to woman, is the strict performance of duty to the soldier. His duty is a jewel, whose rays brighten and make beautiful his life : it is a talisman of mighty power. The remembrance of its discharge soothes the dying soldier on the stricken field, whispers in his ear the meed of well-earned praise, tells him that the recompense of his valor shall be the tears of his countrymen.

What nobler epitaph can be graven upon the tomb of any man? What better eulogy pronounced upon his life, than the simple words “He did his duty!”

The qualities of which I have spoken are the necessary characteristics of every soldier who comprehends the true purpose of his calling. In the patriot soldier, whose mission it is to struggle for the supremacy of great principles, who is the gallant champion of an invaded country or the fearless crusader of liberty, these qualities should find their most perfect development. He who maintains a great cause successfully, is thoroughly imbued with the enthusiasm its principles beget. He who consecrates his sword to a holy purpose must be pure at heart, if he would identify himself with the principle for which he struggles.

The mercenary can fight manfully and die heroically for his hire. He finds pleasure in the excitement and carnage of the battle : he looks not beyond the mere fact of success. In a great victory, he recognizes only the hand of his general, only the supremacy of brute force, and its highest results are to him the opportunities of destruction and pillage.

If such motives can impel the display of courage, what must be the enthusiasm, the valor, the determination of one who fights for an idea which his heart has cherished, for that which reason and reflection have approved, for that which his better nature craves with all its strength?

The battle then is not the mere tournament of rival generals, not the mere concussion of opposing forces, not the mere display of courage or the gravity of brute strength ; but the grave contest of discordant ideas, the threshold of new systems, the effort to elevate or ameliorate the condition of a people, to avenge the wrongs of centuries, or restrain the license of a disordered sentiment. For such purposes are the exertions of the patriot soldier needed : to effect them, calls for the display of those qualities which constitute soldierly excellence. To be prepared when the time demands his services, requires of the patriot soldier a thorough study and appreciation of those duties which are in themselves virtues, that tarnish or brighten as they are neglected or cultivated, and upon whose performance depends the stability of all governments, the safety of all homes, the happiness of all people.

What a stimulus to the discharge of his duty has the American Soldier ! The defence of a land where Freedom sits enthroned in the heart of the nation ; where a beacon fire has been kindled, whose rays, shining steadily forth over the troubled earth, tell of an asylum for the oppressed, where the blessings of peace and liberty are inseparable, where contentment presides at the lowliest hearthstone, where prosperity is universal, because industry is untrammelled ; where production is assisted by government, not fettered by oppressive enactments ; where all are happy because all are free, and all are free because all appreciate their rights.

Before the American Soldier is placed the example of those patriots whose labors created the system which it his duty to preserve.

That army of freemen has nearly passed away. Here and there a solitary form, riven and blasted with the storms of a century, lingers in our midst, stately and venerable as an oak of the forest.

Such an one is in our assembly to-day : JOHN O'BRIEN SHENANDOAH, in whose memory, at the age of one hundred and six years, remain the

events of the revolution as fresh and vivid as though they were of yesterday.

To the names of those patriots, our history has given immortality : our present greatness is their eulogy. Their mission was to scourge from the land the rapacious instruments of tyranny, to lift from the popular vision the blinding veil of despotism, to open a new era in the progress of humanity, by asserting the inalienable rights of man. Their mission was accomplished : this Great Union is at once the proof and the monument of their services.

As if Providence had deemed the crisis which evolved our liberty the most important the world yet had seen, and requiring in its development the assistance of the grandest combination of human virtues the mind can conceive, a man was provided for the emergency, who, in every sphere of life, whether as soldier or civilian, whether on the battle-field or in the cabinet, presented qualities so perfect in their adaptation to the times, so loyal to the great principles of truth and honor, that with one accord the voice of the nations has assigned him a place above all others, and speaks his name only with the accents of reverence and love.

The birth of that man we celebrate to-day. Twenty millions of people have his name upon their lips, and his memory in their hearts. There needs no monument, striking the stars, to tell us he has lived ; for the heart of every man in this broad land throbbed with a prouder pulsation, as this morning's sun arose to remind him that he was the countryman of WASHINGTON. The noblest tribute the American people can pay to the memory of WASHINGTON is to enshrine it in their hearts, by making his character the national type. To the soldier he presents the truest model of his profession. The qualities which render him such, the world knows and has approved ; but we, as a people, should not stop at approval : we should justify the decision by an adoption of those principles which were the basis of his efforts, and which he sought to incorporate in the structure of our government.

The purest Republic that popular struggles have inaugurated was upheld in its infancy by the protecting arm of the purest man Heaven has given to Earth. He was a soldier, so just, so wise, so patriotic, so far removed from the influence of passion, so discriminating in his judgment, so wise in his counsels, so energetic

in action, so thoroughly the man of principle, so unselfish and generous in thought and word and deed, so actuated by the highest christian philosophy, so calm in danger, so utterly without fear and without guile, one to whom it seemed Nature had no more to give, that our humanity can hardly claim brotherhood with him in anything but death.

It is this man, Citizens, whose virtues have made him the admiration of the world, that you have the proud privilege of calling countryman. It is this man, whose name stands first in the galaxy of great commanders, that you are called upon by the force of your nationality to select as your example. WASHINGTON is not too great to be imitated. He was sent by Providence, not only to conduct successfully our revolution, but to bequeath a character for the benefit of his country.

My Countrymen : The position our nation has assumed, standing in fact the solitary Republic of the World, proudly independent and defiant, jealously watched by eyes eager and willing to discover tokens of weakness and decay, calls upon each citizen of our land to practise those virtues, without which the plan

of self-government must be a failure. Your future happiness as a people, your individual sovereignty as citizens, your homes, your hearthstones, the coming manhood of your children ; all, all implore with one voice the preservation of that spotless national honor which WASHINGTON bequeathed to the keeping of your Fathers.

Will their children betray their trust ? Will you, the voluntary defenders of that honor, permit your swords to tarnish with the rust of negligence ?

There can be but one response. The temple of our liberties will remain the impregnable fortress of freedom ; the memories of our patriot soldiers will strengthen you for future struggles, and the name of WASHINGTON will be revered in the adoption of his virtues.



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